

Terri's Day challenges the nation to unify

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Kevin Fobbs

President, National Urban Policy Action Council

Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of the committee, I come to you asking that your committee join the Michigan Senate which passed a resolution to establish a Terri Schiavo Day of Remembrance and a celebration of the Culture of Life.

It is a humble request which will impact millions of residents of Michigan and their families as well.

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Terri's Day — A Celebration of the Culture of Life honoring Terri Schiavo with a day of remembrance in Michigan challenges each and every one of us to stop for a moment and ask ourselves a question, do we respect ourselves, our families, our lives? And if we are faced with the question of the possible certainty of death, does anyone truly know, or even have the faintest clue about, our wishes? That is the greatest good, the greatest legacy that Terri Schiavo's death and an annual "Terri's Day" can bring to our lives and to the celebration of the Culture of Life.

On March 18th, we as a **nation began** to grieve again, to reach into our hearts and feel with our collective national spirit what the Schindler family

felt last year at this time as each moment since Terri was disconnected from the feeding lifeline, the moments crept by like hours and hours like days.

All of us have felt in some way that pain — even if it were only in the privacy of our loved one's home, hospital room, hospice or perhaps talking with an attorney and doctor attempting to make sense out of some fleeting comments made in a conversation perhaps voiced ten, twelve or even two decades earlier — not necessarily an expression of her true feeling about an end-of-life decision but merely an incidental musing in a long-forgotten side conversation.

For at least one million Americans, and quite possibly a great deal more, this is an opportunity to voice an opinion through a pledge supporting a resolution in each state called "Terri's Day — A Celebration of the Culture of Life." Each and every person who cares that your family, your spouse, your mother, your father, your sister or brother understands with clarity what you wish the end of life for you to be, with dignity and certainty should sign the online pledge at www.kevinfobbs.com and take the additional step to sign a Living Will — or as they call it at www.terrisfight.org, the Will to Live.

Some have asked why those in **Michigan or in America** should care about an annual Terri's Day. It is quite simple; we tend to keep turning the page on the Culture of Life because we feel it does not affect us. We tend to

believe that seemingly universal belief that those who are handicapped, those who are not quite living a "perfect" life or by contemporary notion "ideal" then those lives are possibly disposable, marginal, not relevant, and part of the Culture of Death which embraces a "disposable society."

But life and our values for the Culture of Life are not disposable. Think about the young people today who would rather hurt themselves or even take their own lives rather than feel "imperfect" or the elderly person whose family is told by an insensitive health care professional while the stricken person struggles to cling to life, "she would be better off in another place," — just let her die, disconnect her from life, because her quality of life is not up to "contemporary standards."

Why does celebrating the Culture of Life in Michigan become so essential for all of us? It is important for several reasons. Dr. Jack Kervorkian, also known as "Doctor Death" helped launch first in Michigan and then the nation the notion of the death culture. Secondly, and equally as important, at the July 14 and 15th event — held during the month of our nation's Independence the entire Schindler family – Terri Schiavo's family – will be in Michigan to help with those who have met challenges in standing up for some aspect of the Culture of Life.

In March of this year... I sat at my cousin's funeral — or going home celebration, which more accurately describes it — thinking about the dearly

departed and how she packed so much caring for others into her life even as she struggled with illness and advancing age. She was a wonderful woman who had lived through many, many challenges in her life, but in her 73 years she had met these challenges with dignity and had conveyed to her family when would be the right time to allow her to pass away.

Her daughter, who is a minister, spoke to the packed church about the times when, with all of her pain and then a stroke, the doctors had informed them that perhaps it was better to let her go. Yet that was three years ago that that occurred, and if the family had listened to the doctors and refused to see how she fought back and not only recovered but went back to volunteering at the church to feed and clothe the homeless.

The medical professionals didn't care about an elderly lady who was on dialysis, but the family did and they knew better. Patricia lived three more years — years her extensive extended family considered "a gift from God."

So isn't part of the lesson of Terri's legacy and Terri's Day for families and loved ones to have a meaningful conversation with their family and to have the written document on hand as well that conveys the wishes clearly and concisely? You betcha.

As I sat in the church I thought of all of the families across the nation and the world who were sitting at their loved one's bedsides — or even standing

outside of a hospital emergency room — overwhelmed with emotion, torn by what may be days of conflicting anguished decisions. I thought again of how out of death we may have the certainty of life. Terri's death reminded the nation that yes a state can and will starve you to death, and your family may be rendered helpless as you watch your loved one's precious life forces drain slowly away.

By signing the online pledge at www.kevinfobbs.com or going to www.terrisfight.org, you can learn about how to encourage your family, fellow legislators, to support this resolution to establish **MARCH 31** as an official Terri's Day, share ideas and support The Terri Schindler Schiavo Foundation as well as Culture of Life activities and events in every community in Michigan or around the nation.

You can make a dramatic difference for yourself, your family and for the nation. Stand up for the Culture of Life because one person, one life, one family can and does make a difference in America. Make the difference and be the difference today. Michigan...The countdown for the Culture of Life has begun.

Kevin Fobbs is President of National Urban Policy Action Council (NuPac), a non-partisan civic and citizen-action organization that focuses on taking the politics out of policy to secure urban America's future one neighborhood, one city, and one person at a time. View NuPac on the web at www.nupac.info. Kevin Fobbs is a regular contributing columnist for the Detroit News. He is also the daily host of The Kevin Fobbs *Show* -- see www.kevinfobbs.com. Write him at kevin@kevinfobbs.com.